

Evaluate Current Home/School Relationships at Your School Consider the Impact on Student Learning, Assessment and Achievement

The PASS model refers to the term "parent" as any adult who plays an important role in a child's family life.

The PASS model was designed to respond to the recent surge of parent interest in educational initiatives. This rare opportunity to unify goals for student achievement allows for the creation of a breakout role for parents and educators and can move home/school partnerships in a fundamentally different direction toward focused academic partnership. The PASS model is the compass for that journey.

The descriptions and actions used to build an effective academic home/school culture matter as do perspectives on home/school partnerships from the past; understanding students and current educational challenges; and introducing and implementing new ideas, new knowledge and new ways to demonstrate and measure learning. All of this matters for the future of our children in the global economy.

In education, the language of participation, involvement and engagement is often used interchangeably. A genuine understanding of parent engagement and targeted activities linked directly to student learning and performance has a greater effect on meaningful learning, assessment, achievement and academic success than more general forms of involvement.

This PASS document contains information to help you do the following:

- Understand the various types of parent programs and activities that impact student learning and assessment;
- Consider the importance of building parent/educator partnerships that impact student learning, assessment and achievement;
- Review, define, and refine the concept of home/school partnerships that are vital if educators and parents are to become influential partners in student learning, assessment and achievement.
- Use PASS partnerships to build and rebuild school-level programs to engage parents in student learning, assessment and achievement;
- Provide parents with meaningful and productive ways to engage in their child's learning; and
- Help with making systemic changes that become part of the student achievement agenda.

Historically, student performance strategies utilizing parent engagement in student learning, assessment and achievement have been missing among the critical elements of school improvement measures. The PASS model is the impetus to redefine and support student learning strategies for use *beyond* the classroom so that students can learn and perform better *in* their classroom.

Recognizing and building parent programs that impact student learning, assessment and achievement

As schools begin the PASS partnership process they should review, recognize and evaluate the types of parent engagement that currently occur in their school. It is vital that they recognize and delineate those that directly impact parent engagement in student learning and assessment. This is the beginning of creating a shift in school culture where parents play an academic role using student learning standards and PARCC scores.

Educators should invite parents to participate in the review of parent engagement and identify the current activities that serve as a powerful means to engage parents in student learning and assessment.

PASS recognizes five basic assumptions that shape traditional types of home/school relationships in many schools today:

1. Parents who cannot become engaged in their child's learning and assessment;
2. Parents who choose not to become engaged in their child's learning or assessments;
3. Parents who participate at school functions;
4. Parents who are involved in supporting school needs; and
5. Parents who are directly engaged in student learning and assessment.

PASS is focused on the parent role of working directly with educators, individually and in small groups, to enable parents to support their individual child and those with similar needs. The PASS model does not exclude other roles for parents. However, the sole focus of the PASS model is parent engagement in student learning, assessment and achievement.

The following section describes three distinct roles for parents and examples for insight into current practices. Below, in review of the three roles, PASS partners should look for triggers that increase parent engagement in student learning standards, assessment and achievement.

Parent **participation**, parent **involvement**, and parent **engagement in student learning** have some similar characteristics. Yet when viewed closely and schools plan their parent programs and activities, PASS partners must move beyond participation and involvement because ***parent engagement in student learning is the only role with dramatic effects for increasing student learning.***

One way to understand the difference and benefits of parent **participation, involvement, and engagement in student learning** is to question if student academic performance is likely to change as a direct result of the parent's action. With that knowledge and understanding, parent activities and programs can be developed to have the most powerful impact on increasing student learning, assessment and achievement.

The following information about home/school activities clarify the three most common roles for parents and provide examples to consider current activities as measured against student learning and assessment. Educators and parents should review the information and plan parent activities and programs that have the most powerful potential to improve student learning.

- **Parent Participation** - Parent participation activities generally require no partnerships or collaboration with educators. In fact, there is usually no interaction between parents and educators before, during or after the activity. The phrase "bodies-in-the-building" came from the outdated philosophy behind parent participation. When the success of a school activity is measured by the number of tickets sold or participants listed on an attendance sheet, it is not difficult to understand why parent participation is not a measurement of student learning or achievement.

Examples: Parents are asked to serve in roles such as audience members, become spectators at sporting events, attendees at concerts, read one-way communications sent home, read a school newsletter or vote to pass a school budget.

- The question: Will high attendance at sporting events and a full sign-in sheet from attendance at a school activity improve students' reading or mathematics test scores?

Note: In some schools, or in individual circumstances, parent participation is far from academic engagement; however, it is the first goal for building meaningful home/school partnerships. In such situations, parent participation has the potential to help parents feel comfortable at their child's school, take advantage of services offered to support families, and motivate students to be successful learners.

Parent participation can be viewed as important to student morale, and it can help districts fund educational needs on school grounds or in school buildings. Participation is not necessarily engagement in learning but it can begin to build the foundation for a deeper relationship at the school.

- **Parent Involvement** - Parent involvement is a common vehicle for bringing parents into schools and generally requires little or no partnership action or academic interaction with educators. Benefits of involvement activities are generalized to the school or the entire student body. There is minimal or no attention or support for an individual student's success. Traditionally, so-called "drive-by" parent involvement events generally lack a specific academic or assessment purpose. Involvement activities are often of interest to parent leaders and serve to assist educators. However, they are not instructional strategies for use outside of school that are part of the curriculum or student achievement efforts.

Traditionally, parent involvement programs tend to be led by educators. Parents who are "involved" generally serve the school's agenda by doing the things educators ask or expect them to do – volunteer at school, raise funds, do homework with their child, and parent their child in positive ways while knowledge, voice and decision-making continue to rest with educators.

When parent involvement activities are viewed clearly, the focus is placed on what parents can do to help the *school* community realize its goals for students, rather than what the school community can do to help *parents* realize their educational goals for their child.

Examples: Some traditional involvement activities include book sales, bake sales, surveys, holiday fundraisers, meeting discussions of topics such as school uniforms, chaperoning a student dance/field trip, classroom volunteering, decorating bulletin boards or organizing activities that support educators and the school.

- The question: Will general involvement activities for the benefit of the school reflect individual improvement in math, science, social studies or writing performance? The success of most traditional parent involvement activities is measured by the number of participants or funds raised, which in no way measures student learning or achievement.

Note: The term parent involvement describes the typical way in which home/school relationships have existed for the last half century and often continue in practice today. Parent involvement at school excludes many parents but provides for a position of perceived leadership and influence for those individuals who can participate at school. Parents are helpful to the school, but rarely do involvement activities or programs focus on helping parents reach their goals for their individual child. Parent involvement at school generally does not give parents a voice or engage parents in strategies for direct student learning outcomes or assessment of student learning.

Educators will be extremely grateful and students whose parents are active in school buildings may be proud. Involvement can boost the morale of students, provide assistance and support for educators, raise money for the school, encourage graduation, discourage negative behaviors, but does not engage parents in their child's learning or assessment process.

- **Parent Engagement in Student Learning** - Parent engagement in student learning requires academic contemplation. The anchor of the PASS model is that the engaged parent is an integral and essential part of the student learning process, brought into the act of formal education because of a deep commitment to student success. Parent engagement in student learning and assessment, different from parent participation or involvement at school, is a way to bring teachers and parents together as partners committed to benefitting individual student learning and achievement.

With authentic parent engagement, possibilities are created for the structure of teaching and learning to be flattened and broadened. The option, right and responsibility to impact student learning must be shared by educators and parents, and the agenda being served which is mutually determined and distinctly beneficial to student learning.

Educators, recognizing the complexity of their teaching and learning mission and the challenges they face in realizing improved student outcomes, have often sought ways to bring parents into the role of engagement in student learning and assessment support. Many parents who may have felt marginalized by their perception of professional boundaries around the school do not feel that they can play a meaningful role other than homework help. PASS can ensure proactive healthy home/school partnerships focused on the priority of student learning and achievement.

Examples: Hands-on modeling at academic family nights; parent/teacher conferences that include students; individual teacher/parent coaching; development of academic goals/plans with student-specific skills and strategies; mutually (parent/educator/student) designed opportunities for generalizing school tasks at home; informal assessment techniques and feedback to teachers; homework monitoring (not homework help); standards-based forums and workshops; technology software and lab experiences; and innovation fairs. Also included are “Family 5” communications that include what students are learning in class; what students need to do once they have learned new concepts; how concepts are taught based on academic standards; application in the real world; at-home strategies and assessment supports. Teacher partners can provide many more examples, supports, and materials to support parents’ role of engaging in student learning, assessment and achievement.

- The question: The question for consideration is this: While parents may be “involved” with a survey, a newsletter, an invitation to a performance, or an information session, how can we transform these participation and involvement activities into authentic engagement where both parents and educators take active partnership roles to realize the benefit for student learning, assessment and achievement?

Note: The engaged parent is an essential partner and feels valued for his or her unique contribution. Through PASS partnerships, educators and parents can create high-level forums, meetings, and individual student learning strategies to facilitate open conversations about new methods of teaching, learning and innovations as they influence student success. Some parents may feel ill-equipped to participate in partnerships to directly impact their child’s learning and assessment. Educators can meet with those parents, review the student’s school work and the academic expectations, work together to create one or two learning goals for the student, provide strategies for parents to try at home, and set a follow-up communication to share results. Educators can coach struggling parents and adjust the student’s in-class instruction and support.

The PASS model leverages the power of informed partnership and the principles of collaborative engagement. In comparison to participation and involvement, the genuine power of parent engagement in student learning, assessment and achievement require direct contact and a joint partnership focused on the same goal of student success.